



A Virtual Connection to Neurological Help

When Vlado K. faced the possibility of a complicated surgery for a serious neck condition in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, he reached out to Cleveland Clinic for a Virtual Second Opinion.

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– Vlado K.

who underwent neck surgery in 2020 after receiving a Virtual Second Opinion from Cleveland Clinic

The Challenge

Just as the COVID-19 pandemic began spreading in early 2020, Vlado K., an avid swimmer and ping-pong player from Bulgaria, began experiencing neck pain that spread through his arms, wrists and fingers.

Vlado visited his doctor, who ordered computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging exams. The images showed that Vlado had multiple conditions that can progress in severity without proper treatment.

His physician recommended a spinal fusion of the third and fourth cervical vertebrae

(C-3, C-4), but Vlado, who had previously been treated for cancer, wanted a second opinion.

“I wasn’t completely sure whether or not this condition was a part of my previous cancer, and I wasn’t sure that the solution I was offered by my doctor was actually the best for me,” he says.

The Solution

Vlado’s grandson, who lives in Ohio, recommended that he reach out to the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic for a second opinion. Given that he was in Bulgaria, and with pandemic travel restrictions in place, fortunately Vlado was able to take advantage of Virtual Second Opinions by Cleveland Clinic, which makes consultations with the institution’s expert physicians available to patients around the world.

Within a few days, The Clinic obtained Vlado’s medical records electronically and arranged for a video call between himself and neurosurgeon Edward Benzel, MD. Instead of a spinal fusion, Dr. Benzel recommended laminoplasty of the C-3 and C-4 vertebrae, a surgical procedure that could alleviate both the spinal stenosis and the cervical spondylotic myelopathy with a lower risk of complications than spinal fusion.



“My situation was very critical at that point, and Dr. Benzel recommended surgery within two months to prevent the possibility of a fall or something else that could potentially leave me paralyzed,” Vlado recalls.

Vlado subsequently underwent the recommended surgery at a hospital close to his home and was able to make a complete recovery. “I had a very good surgeon,” he says. “I can swim and play ping-pong with no pain in my arms, so it was a very good outcome, with the help of Cleveland Clinic.”

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Why a Virtual Second Opinion by Cleveland Clinic Made the Difference

“The Virtual Second Opinions program is very convenient and very important for people around the world,” Vlado says. “You don’t have to be confined to a certain geographical region. You can take advantage of a highly respected institution like Cleveland Clinic and the expertise of its physicians. Virtual Second Opinions is a very modern way to solve a difficult health problem.”

If you’re interested in obtaining a virtual second opinion from experts at Cleveland Clinic, visit [**clinic2ndopinion.io**](https://www.clevelandclinic.com/second-opinion).

With The Clinic, patients have virtual access to 3,500 leading Cleveland Clinic specialists with expertise in more than 550 advanced subspecialties—all available through a computer or mobile device. Cases are reviewed by professionals with expertise in a patient’s specific medical condition, leading to less doubt and greater peace of mind when it comes to both treatment plans and patient outcomes. For more information, visit www.theclinic.io.

